

Mr. Bryan's Fight for Prohibition

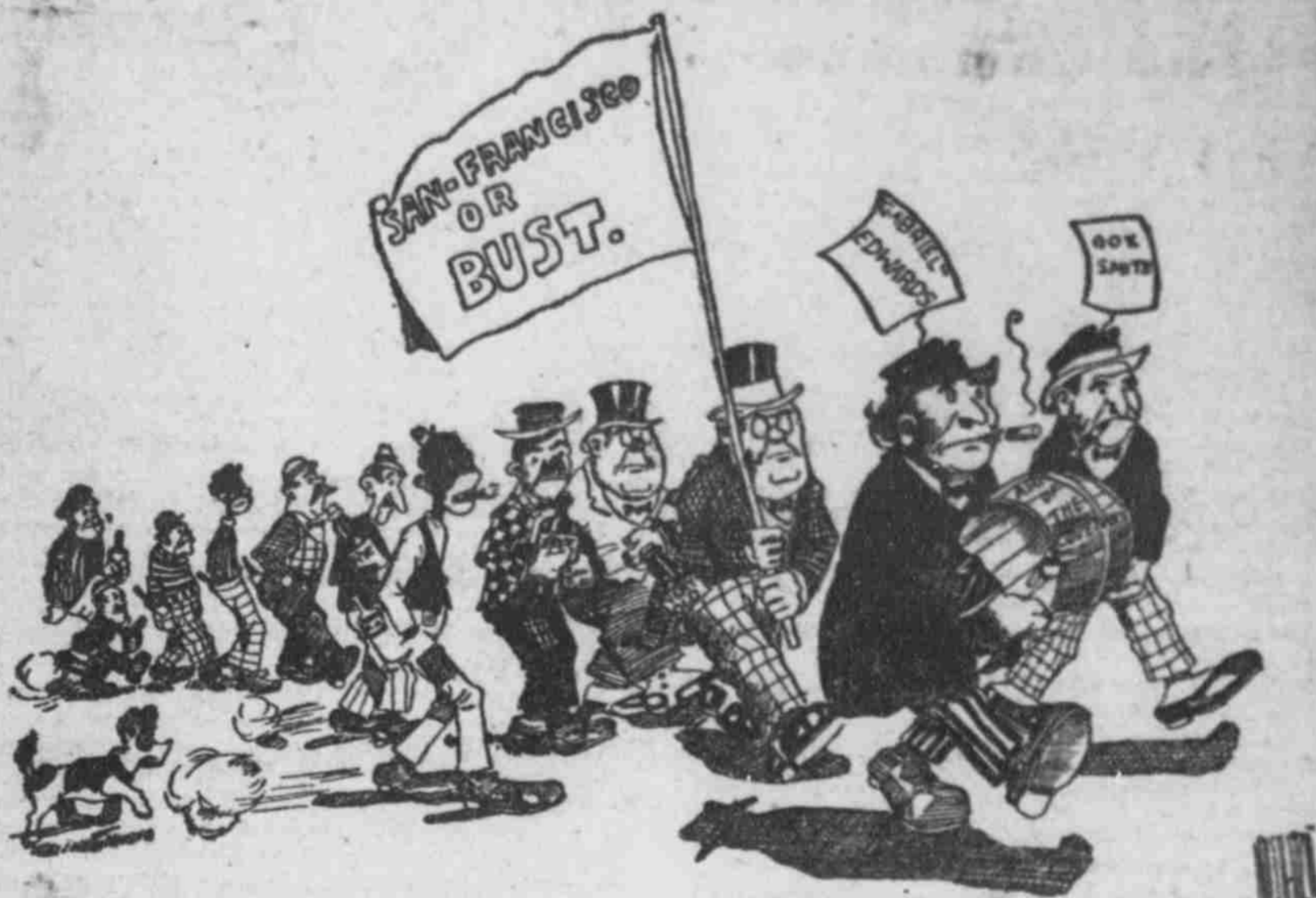
I appreciate the World's frankness in laying before its readers its financial obligations to the liquor traffic. They can now decide whether the World's servile worship of the Rum God is sincere devotion or due to money in hand paid. As it has qualified itself to ask questions I gladly take advantage of the space offered to answer its questions, that its constituency may be able to judge whether my fight against the saloon is inspired by mercenary motives or is a matter of principle. I was drawn into the fight in 1910 when county option was the issue in Nebraska and when the breweries controlled enough state senators to prevent the submission of the initiative and referendum and were secretly planning to control the Democratic nominations for the next legislature. My first speech was made at Omaha—then so terrorized by the manufacturers of, and dealers in, intoxicants that, though I had carried the state twice for the Presidency, I could not find a prominent Democrat to introduce me or to even sit upon the platform with me. I paid the rental of the hall and my speech was an elaboration of the declaration that the Democratic party should not die of delirium tremens. In justice to Nebraska I add that within seven years the state adopted a prohibition amendment by a majority of twenty-nine thousand and that in 1919 the legislature, elected on that issue, ratified the national amendment with but one dissenting vote.

In order to make the fight against the saloons in 1910 I was compelled to give up the senatorship and that fall felt it my duty to oppose the Democratic candidate for Governor, a personal and political friend, because he took the wet side.

Until the fall of 1914 I never expected national prohibition to be a prominent issue in my life time, but during the trip that I made through the West that year with a view to aiding in the election of a Democratic congress, I was convinced that the prohibition issue was ripe for settlement. After that election I supported prohibition whenever it became an issue and urged the Democratic party to take the dry side in the states but did not favor its being embodied in the national platform of 1916. Between Jan. 1st, 1915 and Jan. 16, 1919 I spoke for prohibition in many states, among which I recall Alabama, California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nevada, New York, Montana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas and Wyoming. During this period of 9 years (1910 to '19) I spoke under the auspices of the various national and state organizations supporting prohibition, including the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, The Anti-Saloon League, and the National Dry Federation—I had the honor of being President of the last named organization. During this period of nine years I received no compensation whatever and nearly always paid my own traveling expenses, and I never derived more satisfaction from any money that I ever expended. My refusal, however, to accept compensation was not due to any thought that compensation was improper—God forbid that the defenders of vice only and not its opponents should be worthy of their hire—but because I knew the foe I was attacking and was not willing to have my efforts discredited by the criticism of those who, judging others by themselves, could not conceive of unpurchased services in a righteous cause.

After the fight had been won at the election of 1918 and prohibition became a part of the constitution, the controversy ceased to be a political one and became a matter of law enforcement. I then felt at liberty to consider an invitation extended by the anti-saloon league to assist it in its campaign for funds to support enforcement and to carry on its propaganda in favor of world prohibition. Sympathizing with the League in its purpose and yet unable to contribute so large amount of time to its work as it desired I accepted its offer to speak under its auspices and spent nearly four months of last year traveling with representatives of the League. During this period I used time that would have otherwise been devoted to lecturing and received a little more than one-half as much per speech as I usually receive for my lectures. At these meetings I discussed the work accom-

AS THE WETS WOULD HAVE IT



Drawn by Samuel L. Nash, Jr. (aged 14 years), Chandler, Henderson county, Texas, from an editorial suggestion made in the February issue of The Commoner.

plished in behalf of prohibition and the tasks before us—these tasks including the holding of the ground already taken, the enforcement of prohibition by nation and the several states, the advocacy of total abstinence and the spread of world prohibition. At these meetings it was usual for officials of the League to take up a voluntary collection for their work. Last fall the League inquired whether I could speak for them this year. I declined to promise more than a few days, giving as my reason my desire to reserve this year for political work. I have spoken for the League on eight days since January 1st and will spend not to exceed eight days more speaking under its auspices, the remaining meetings to be held in Florida during the present month. I have no engagements with the League beyond those above mentioned, am not and never have been an official of the League and have had no pecuniary connection with it other than above stated.

If the World's concluding questions were asked by one who could distinguish between courtesy and insult I might think the editor intended to be offensive rather than seek information, but nothing better could be expected of one who insists that the Democratic candidate for President shall be pledged in advance to violate the constitution which he must take an oath to support and thus become the official head of the law breakers of the country. However, that the World may not be able to misrepresent a refusal to answer, I beg to assure it that on all political questions I speak, not as the paid or unpaid representative of any organization, but only for myself and for those who accept me as their spokesman. On prohibition I deem it a pleasure as well as a duty to defend the record of the Democratic party which voted three-fourths of its senators and two-thirds of its congressmen for the submission of the prohibition amendment, and gave to the ratification of that amendment the vote of every state that it controlled. Providence permitting, I shall be at San Francisco next June, whether a delegate or not, and when the World makes its descent upon, or rather ascent to, the convention, foaming like a mug of beer and raging like strong drink, the mouthpiece of the most corrupt band of free booters that ever defied the conscience of the nation, I shall be one of an invincible throng of Democrats who will bury King Alcohol and his wicked crime-creating business so deep that even Edwards' brazen trumpet cannot call them back to life.

W. J. BRYAN.

Mr. McAdoo's suggestion that the party send uninstructed delegates to the national convention is unfortunate. The old plan of sending instructed delegations resulted in giving the

secret influences an unfair advantage in the making of nominations. The abuse of confidence led to the primary. Reactionaries may be in control of the Republican party, but the Democratic party should not turn back to the methods that strengthened the political boss.

PERSONAL LIBERTY

Governor Edwards is harking back to the old Personal Liberty argument. He should know that the automobile has overthrown that argument. A man does not have to be run over more than twice by a drunken chauffeur, to get a clear understanding of a personal liberty that furnishes excuses for the creating of criminals and the destruction of life. Personal liberty ends where the rights of others begin. A man who thinks more of intoxicating liquor than he does of the welfare of society ought to abandon society and live alone—then he can do as he pleases.

Anxious Reader: No, Mr. Bryan is not asking for the incorporation of a "Single Standard of Morality" plank in the next Democratic platform. He presented the matter to the Nebraska Constitutional convention because the convention had to endorse, by implication, one standard or the other. But he is glad he brought the matter to the public's attention because it has given a number of unfriendly editors a chance to publish a moral photograph of themselves in the discussion of the subject.

ENGLAND'S DRINK BILL

On another page will be found England's drink bill. Nearly 400,000,000 pounds, or \$2,000,000,000 counting five dollars to the pound, as it is when the pound is at par. Two billions only represents the money which will be expended if the increase continues until next month—it does not include the enormous cost to England in the impairment of productive power. Great Britain will soon find it necessary to follow the example of the United States.

NOW FOR THE BURGLARS

If the burglars, pickpockets, horse thieves and fire-bugs put up a candidate for president in the Republican party, Governor Edwards will have a rival for the vote of the lawless element of the country. If not, he can hope to have a monopoly of the support of that part of the electorate.

THE 1,000 PER CENT AMERICANS

In view of McAdoo's statement about last year's profits, would it be improper to speak of the coal operators as 1,000 per cent Americans? —The Liberator (N. Y.).